

CHICAGO, ILL.
NEWS

E - 434,849
JUL 6 1973

New philosophy for CIA?

William E. Colby may be just the man to guide the Central Intelligence Agency to new heights of prestige and service. But it seems to us, in spite of Sen. Symington's enthusiastic endorsement, that he has yet to prove it.

Colby, nominated as new head of the CIA, has been involved in its covert operations through a long career. That is to say, his career has been spent in that branch of the CIA known as the "Department of Dirty Tricks."

One of the most notorious dirty tricks of recent CIA history was Operation Phoenix, which Colby directed. This was a secret program to frustrate the Viet Cong as an effective guerrilla and subversion force. Many have alleged that it was basically an assassination organization that regularly employed torture as a means to its ends. Colby has testified that it was no such thing. What is certain is that from 1968 to 1971 the Phoenix program killed 20,517 Vietnamese. That qualifies as big business, and Colby was its manager.

During Colby's tenure as a high executive the CIA began venturing into domestic activities — something its charter specifically forbade.

It subsidized the National Student Assn. and some other organizations during the period of student unrest and violence. And, of course, it gave E. Howard Hunt Jr. the equipment that Hunt used in burgling the office of Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist.

It's not much wonder that some of the senators examining Colby's qualifications raised pointed questions as to his philosophy and bent of mind. For, granting that international espionage is an unpleasant necessity, the need at this point is someone in charge of the CIA who will keep it clear of domestic involvements and keep its overseas operations under close discipline.

Colby says he will do just that. He conceded that the agency's support of a secret war in Laos, for example, was hardly what Congress had in mind when it created the CIA, and that giving Hunt his gear was a mistake. He said he favors "a greater degree of exposure on what we do," which is to say, less secrecy.

Colby said that the CIA had no business in domestic affairs and that he would "reinforce very vigorously" that principle. He said he would leave the CIA rather than do anything illegal. He said he would keep the CIA focused on its basic job of gathering foreign intelligence. The inference was that he would keep it clear of participatory tasks like training armies and overthrowing governments.

That sounds good. But we urge the Senate to get ready to keep a closer eye on the CIA than it has in the past. For the CIA has come perilously close to being a President's secret army, remote from the control and the purposes of the people.